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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

SAJ-01 /061 W
---------- 062121
R 141814Z OCT 76
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2531
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION USBERLIN
AMCONSUL BREMEN
AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF
AMCONSUL FRANKFURT
AMCONSUL HAMBURG
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMCONSUL STUTTGART

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 17425

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, GW
SUBJECT: CONVERSATIONS WITH CDU PARTY LEADERS HELMUT KOHL AND KURT BIEDENKOPF

1. AT A FAREWELL PRIVATE LUNCH IN MAINZ YESTERDAY WITH CDU PARTY CHAIRMAN HELMUT KOHL, HE TOLD ME THAT HIS OVER-RIDING CONCERN NOW WAS THE STRAUSS PROBLEM. THE CSU LEADER WAS ACTING IN AN IMPOSSIBLE WAY, MAKING UNACCEPT-ABLE DEMANDS OR CONDITIONS FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF A SINGLE CDU/CSU FRAKTION IN THE BUNDESTAG. A DECISION HAD TO BE REACHED SOON, AND IF STRAUSS WERE NOT PREPARED TO ACCEPT A REASONABLE ARRANGEMENT, THEN THE CDU WOULD HAVE NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO ORGANIZE IT-SELF IN BAVARIA AGAINST THE CSU WHICH ITSELF WOULD ATTEMPT TO BECOME A NATIONAL PARTY. STRAUSS' CSU COLLEAGUES WERE ALL OPPOSED TO SUCH A CONFRONTATION,
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BUT DID NOT HAVE THE COURAGE TO STAND UP TO THEIR PARTY

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LEADER WHOSE PROBLEM, AS FAR AS KOHL COULD FATHOM IT, WAS MORE PSYCHOLOGICAL THAN POLITICAL. NEXT WEEK WAS THE LONGEST A RESOLUTION COULD BE PUT OFF.

2. SHOULD THE CDU AND CSU SPLIT AS A FRAKTION, KOHL ADDED, HE WOULD NOT BE INTERESTED IN COMING TO BONN MERELY AS CDU FRAKTION LEADER. IN THAT CASE, HE WOULD REMAIN IN MAINZ AND CONCENTRATE INITIALLY ON ORGANIZING THE CDU IN BAVARIA.

3. REGARDLESS OF DEVELOPMENTS, KOHL SAID HE WAS CERTAIN THE SPD/FDP COALITION COULD NOT SURVIVE FOUR YEARS, AND THAT SOONER OR LATER HE WOULD BE CHANCELLOR. THE FIRST BIG TEST WOULD COME AFTER THE LAND HESSE ELECTION IN THE FALL OF 1978.

4. ACCORDING TO KOHL, IF ALL WENT WELL AND HE ENDED UP IN BONN AS CHAIRMAN OF A COMBINED CDU/CSU FRAKTION, HIS WIFE AND TWO SONS WOULD SPEND MOST OF THEIR TIME AT THE FAMILY HOME IN LUDWIGSHAFEN TO WHICH HE WOULD COMMUTE ON WEEKENDS AND HOLIDAYS. HE AND HIS WIFE DID NOT WANT TO PULL THE BOYS OUT OF THEIR PRESENT SCHOOL.

5. KOHL WAS BOTH AGITATED AND DETERMINED ABOUT THE STRAUSS PROBLEM. HE STRUCK ME AS A MAN WHOSE PATIENCE HAS BEEN EXHAUSTED, AND WHO IS IRRITATED THAT WHAT HE CONSIDERED ESSENTIALLY AN ELECTORAL VICTORY HAS NOW BEEN CAST INTO SHADOW BY THE BAVARIAN'S ABERRANT ACTIVITY. HE SEEMS TO FEEL THAT THE BASIC MOTIVATION IS THE PERSONAL ENVY OF AN OLDER POLITICIAN, WHO HAS NEVER BEEN ABLE TO FULFILL HIS AMBITION NATIONALLY, OF A YOUNGER AND MORE SUCCESSFUL ONE.

6. IN A SUBSEQUENT CALL ON CDU SECRETARY GENERAL BIEDENKOPF, WE DISCUSSED KOHL'S PROBLEMS WITH FRANZ

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BONN 17425

JOSEF STRAUSS. AFTER EXPRESSING GENERAL SATISFACTION WITH THE UNION PARTIES' SHOWING ON OCTOBER 3, BIEDENKOPF REMARKED THAT IT APPEARED AS IF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS WERE NOW TRYING TO THROW AWAY THEIR VICTORY. IT WAS DIFFICULT, BIEDENKOPF SAID, TO UNDERSTAND WHAT STRAUSS WAS UP TO. IT PROBABLY, HE COMMENTED, COULD BE EXPLAINED MORE IN PSYCHOLOGICAL TERMS THAN IN POLITICAL TERMS (I.E., STRAUSS' REMARKS WERE THE PRODUCT OF A FRUSTRATED AND BITTER, AGING POLITICIAN).

7. BIEDENKOPF WAS ALSO CRITICAL OF KOHL'S HANDLING OF THE MATTER. BY INSISTING THAT STRAUSS PROMISE THE CSU WOULD REMAIN IN A JOINT FRAKTION WITH THE CDU FOR THE NEXT FOUR YEARS, KOHL WAS PUTTING HIMSELF INTO THE POSITION OF BEING THE ONE WHO MAKES DEMANDS, WHEN IN CONFIDENTIAL

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REALITY IT WAS STRAUSS WHO WAS CREATING DIFFICULTIES. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER, BIEDENKOPF SAID, FOR KOHL TO ANNOUNCE THAT HE WAS COMING TO BONN TO BECOME CHAIRMAN OF A JOINT FRAKTION AND PLACE THE BURDEN ON STRAUSS FOR ANY DIFFICULTIES. BIEDENKOPF IS CONVINCED THAT PART OF THE PROBLEM IS THAT KOHL REALLY DOES NOT WANT TO LEAVE MAINZ. HOWEVER, HE MUST, BIEDENKOPF FEELS, DEMONSTRATE LEADERSHIP IF THE UNION PARTIES HOPE TO TAKE OVER THE REINS OF GOVERNMENT IN THE NEXT LEGISLATIVE PERIOD.

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8. BIEDENKOPF SAID HE HAD NOT MADE UP HIS MIND WHETHER TO REMAIN SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE CDU OR TO DEVOTE HIS ENERGIES TO THE MANAGEMENT OF THE BUNDESTAG. IF STRAUSS WERE TO FORM A NATION-WIDE CSU, BIEDENKOPF WAS PREPARED TO GO TO BAVARIA AND FORM A BAVARIAN CDU. A BAVARIAN CDU, BIEDENKOPF SAID, WOULD MAKE CONSIDERABLE INROADS INTO CSU STRENGTH. HE COMMENTED THAT THERE WERE AT LEAST TWENTY CSU DEPUTIES (OUT OF 53) IN THE BUNDESTAG WHO WERE PREPARED TO SWITCH OVER AND BECOME MEMBERS OF A BAVARIAN CDU.
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